

## **George Washington to John A. Washington, June 20, 1775, The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor.**

**\*To JOHN AUGUSTINE WASHINGTON**

Philadelphia, June 20, 1775.

Dear Brother: I am now to bid adieu to you, and to every kind of domestick ease, for a while. I am Imbarked on a wide Ocean, boundless in its prospect, and from whence, perhaps, no safe harbour is to be found. I have been called upon by the unanimous Voice of the Colonies to take Command of the Continental Army. An honour I neither sought after, nor desired, as I am thoroughly convinced, that is requires greater Abilities, and much more experience, than I am Master of, to conduct a business so extensive in its nature, and arduous in the execution; but the partiality of the Congress, joined to a political motive, really left me without a Choice; and I am now Commissioned a General and Commander in chief of all the Forces now raisd, or to be raisd, for the defence of the United Colonies. That I may discharge the Trust to the Satisfaction of my Employers, is my first wish; that I shall aim to do it, there remains as little doubt of; how far I may succeed is another point; but this I am sure of, that in the worst event I shall have the consolation of knowing (if I act to the best of my judgment) that the blame ought to lodge upon the appointers, not the appointed, as it was by no means a thing of my own seeking, or proceeding from any hint of my friends.

I am at liberty to inform you, that the Congress, in a Committee, (which will I dare say, be agreed to when reported) have consented to a Continental Currency; have ordered two millions of Dollars to be struck for payment of the Troops, &c. and have voted 15,000

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Men as a Continental Army, which number will be augmented, as the strength of the British Troops will be greater than was expected at the time of passing that vote. General Ward, General Lee, General Schuyler and General Putnam are appointed Major Generals under me; the Brigadier Generals are not yet appointed. Major Gates Adjutant General.<sup>1</sup> I expect to set out to-morrow for Boston and hope to be joined there in a little time by Ten Companies of Riflemen from this Province, Maryland and Virginia; For other Articles of Intelligence, I shall refer you to the Papers, as the Printers are diligent in collecting every thing that is stirring.

I shall hope that my Friends will visit and endeavor to keep up the spirits of my Wife as much as they can, as my departure will, I know, be a cutting stroke upon her; and on this account alone, I have many very disagreeable sensations. I hope you and my sister (although the distance is great) will find as much leisure this Summer, as to spend a lit fie time at Mount Vernon.

My sincere regards attend you both as also the little ones and I am your most affectionate Brother.

<sup>1</sup>en. Artemas Ward had been appointed by the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts commander of all the forces raised by that colony and was in Cambridge at the head of the troops then besieging Boston. The question of his command and the State rights and other political awkwardness created by the Continental Congress assumption of control are covered by Charles Martyn's *Life of Artemas Ward*. (New York: 1921). <sup>1</sup>ens. Charles Lee and Philip Schuyler accompanied the Commander in Chief from Philadelphia to New York City. Lee continued with him to Cambridge, Mass., where Maj. <sup>1</sup>en. Israel Putnam commanded the Connecticut troops. Horatio <sup>1</sup>ates was in Berkeley County, Va., but joined the Army by the middle of July. He was a captain in the British Army and had been present at Braddock's Defeat, where he was wounded, and he rose afterwards to the rank of major, which he resigned and retired from the service, purchasing lands and settling himself as a planter in Virginia. Lee was a colonel on half pay in the British Army, but he resigned this commission as soon as he was appointed major general by the Congress and before he received his commission in the American Army. He had been a soldier from his youth and had seen much service in America during the French War and afterwards in Europe. When he received this appointment he had been only about 18 months in the Colonies. <sup>1</sup>ates had induced him to buy lands in Virginia. He was an erratic egoist, a poseur, and natural trouble maker; the Indians called him by a name meaning "Boiling Water." While he displayed flashes of genius at times, there can be little doubt that he was mentally unbalanced.